

Fact Sheet: Stalking Victimization

Executive Director: Mary M. Breaux, Ph.D.

Crime Victims' Institute

College of Criminal Justice | Sam Houston State University



Stalking Victimization: The Facts

Alyssa Linares, B.S.
Taylor D. Robinson, M.S.

What is Stalking?¹

Stalking is a pattern of behavior toward a particular individual that would reasonably cause a person to fear or experience significant emotional distress for their safety or the safety of others. Stalking can take place in-person or through electronic means. Behaviors may include, but are not limited to: unwanted contact in-person or through electronic means, unwanted gifts, surveillance, property damage, and threats. On their own, the actions may not be illegal; however, taken together, the behavior may show a stalking pattern that can be documented and reported to police.

Have you Heard?

- ◇ In 2015, 19.1 million women and 6.4 million men reported experiencing stalking in their lifetime.²
- ◇ In 2016, females were twice as likely to be stalked as males.³
- ◇ For individuals who experienced stalking in their lifetime, 21.2% of females and 12.9% of males were under the age of 18.²
- ◇ In 2016, individuals ages 20 to 24 were stalked more frequently than individuals ages 35 and older.³
- ◇ Most survivors are familiar with their stalker whether it be a family member, friend, or acquaintance.⁴
- ◇ Individuals who are divorced or separated were more frequently stalked than individuals who are single, married, or widowed.³
- ◇ Survivors were three times more likely to be stalked by someone they were in a former romantic relationship with than a current partner.³

Stalking through Technology

Cyberstalking refers to stalking behavior that is done through electronic means. In 2016, most survivors experienced both cyberstalking and traditional stalking by their perpetrator.³ Cyberstalking was commonly conducted through the use of smartphones, mobile phones, and social media, followed by email and GPS.⁵ Survivors often receive excessive text messages and phone calls.⁶ Some abusers force survivors to participate in sexual behavior over the phone. Perpetrators use technology to maintain control, instill fear, and make survivors feel as though they cannot escape the abuse. The abuser may threaten to expose the survivor or release demeaning or personal content. To combat this, survivors may change their phone number, delete social media accounts, or relocate. However, these strategies may further isolate the survivor from their social support systems.⁵

How to Help Survivors

As with all crime survivors, they need to be believed, have their feelings validated, and be listened to without having their experience minimized. Often, survivors fail to report because of fear of retaliation or because they do not know their situation constitutes stalking, so being educated on the reality of stalking can help survivors. Some survivors have doubts about working with law enforcement, so police officers should be aware of this and try to show that they believe, validate, and are listening to the survivor.⁸ Practically, victim service practitioners can help survivors to safety plan. While planning, it is important to remember that the survivor may already feel isolated, so balancing safety with social support can help the survivor

mentally, physically, and emotionally.⁵ Other ways to assist survivors include assistance with moving and obtaining civil stalking orders and advice on avoiding and stopping the stalker's behavior and documentation.⁷

If You're Experiencing Stalking

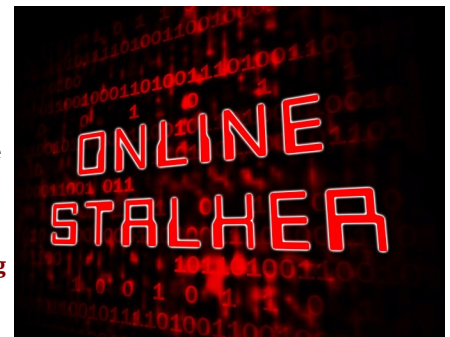
Stalking survivors often feel like they do not have control of their situation. Therefore, to show a pattern of stalking behavior, survivors should document the actions. This will help during the reporting process when police ask for evidence.⁷ Survivors can also seek help from domestic violence or sexual assault victim service agencies. To find one near them, they can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline or the National Sexual Assault Hotline. Survivors can complete a risk assessment with the help of a victim service agency or on their own.⁷ The Stalking, Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center has a risk assessment available at <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/sharp/>.

Resources

- ◇ NCVC– Stalking Resource Center
<https://victimsofcrime.org/stalking-resource-center/>
- ◇ Stalking, Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC)
202-558-0040
<https://www.stalkingawareness.org/>
- ◇ Texas Law Help (Protective Orders)
<https://texaslawhelp.org/protection-from-violence-or-abuse/stalking>
- ◇ Texas Advocacy Project (800-374-4673)
<https://www.texasadvocacyproject.org/>
- ◇ Texas Legal Services Center (512-477-6000)
<https://www.tlsc.org/>

References

- 1 Stalking, Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center. (n.d.). *What is stalking?* <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/definition-faqs/>
- 2 Smith, S. G., Zhang, X., Basile, K. C., Merrick, M. T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., & Chen, J. (2018). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief-updated release*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>
- 3 Truman, J. L. & Morgan, R. E. (2021). *Stalking victimization, 2016*. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/sv16.pdf>
- 4 Smith, S. G., Chen, J., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). *The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2010-2012 state report*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs-staterreportbook.pdf>
- 5 Woodlock, D. (2017). The abuse of technology in domestic violence and stalking. *Violence Against Women*, 23(5), 584-602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216646277>
- 6 Melander, L. A. (2010). College students' perceptions of intimate partner cyber harassment. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 13, 263-268. DOI: 10.1089/cyber.2009.0221
- 7 Boehnlein, T., Kretschmar, J., Regoeczi, W., & Smialek, J. (2020). Responding to stalking victims: Perceptions, barriers, and directions for future research. *Journal of Family Violence*, 35, 755-768. DOI: 10.1007/s10896-020-00147-3
- 8 Logan, T., Cole, J., Shannon, L., & Walker, R. (2006a). *Partner stalking: How women respond, cope, and survive*. Springer.



Texas State University System Board of Regents

Duke Austin
Chairman
Houston

Don Flores
Regent
El Paso

Sheila Faske
Regent
Rose City

Garry Crain
First Vice Chairman
The Hills

Nicki Harle
Regent
Baird

William F. Scott
Regent
Nederland

Camile Settegast
Student Regent
Horseshoe Bay

Charlie Amato
Second Vice Chairman
San Antonio

Stephen Lee
Regent
Beaumont

Alan L. Tinsley
Regent
Madisonville

Resources

- Texas Abuse Hotline (suspicions of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children, adults with disabilities, or people 65 years or older) <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/>
1-800-252-5400
- Texas Council on Family Violence <https://tcfv.org/survivor-resources/>
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault <https://taasa.org/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- National Human Trafficking Hotline 1-888-373-7888
- The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) 512-438-3011
- Victim Connect Resource Center 1-855-484-2846

